

Coptic Orthodox Conference of Bishops of Ontario



The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

May 11, 2020

Dear Premier,

Re: Request to Increase the Permitted Capacity for Liturgical Services and Rites in Ontario

We pray to the Lord that this letter finds you in good health.

On behalf of all Coptic Orthodox faithful in the great Province of Ontario, thank you for your stalwart leadership, tireless effort and profound wisdom that you have exemplified in guiding our Province through the COVID-19 pandemic. We always pray for you during each liturgy we celebrate, and we ask the Lord to grant all leaders His grace and wisdom. At this time, we offer fervent prayers for God's mercy for those who have suffered loss during this time and that He may extend His hand of healing for those who are sick.

As you can imagine, this has been a trying and painful time for our congregants. However, as we are part of the community, the Church supports all measures that have been taken and we continue to advocate for strict adherence to help flatten the curve. The safety and wellbeing of all Ontarians is our paramount priority.

While we have been able to transition many services online, one's physical presence in the sanctuary to celebrate the rites of the church as one body in Christ cannot be replaced. We commend you for the specific care given to the needs of the faith community as in Ontario Regulation 52/20, it specifically delineated "gathering[s]...for the purposes of conducting religious services, rites and ceremonies."

We ask that you continue to take the faith communities' needs in consideration as you adopt further regulations. We ask for your support to permit churches to celebrate all Rites of the Coptic Orthodox faith by allowing churches to use, at any one time, up to twenty (20%) percent of the capacity of each of its sanctuaries as soon as possible. However, we defer to your judgment on the ultimate number you deem safe, but we ask that it be based on a percentage of capacity to adequately address the variances in the size of our sanctuaries. In order to ensure that any increase is safely implemented, we will:

1. implement registration and scheduling protocols to ensure that all screening questions for COVID-19, including symptoms, travel and exposure to COVID-19 carriers, are answered and to control compliance;
2. continue to implement strict safety policies in accordance with the provincial guidelines, including a robust sanitization process of the church;
3. continue to provide all non-rites ministries, including the Sunday School Ministry online; and
4. mandate a strict prohibition against any social gatherings.

While these decisions are difficult, we know that the benefits of the gradual increase in permitted attendance of the liturgical services is a great source of hope for our congregants. We know that celebrating the rites in the church will give congregants grace and peace, which will empower them in the COVID-19 fight.

We ask that this proposal be adopted as part of the early stages of the reopening plan that is currently being implemented by the Province of Ontario.

May God continue to guide you and grant you His grace and protection.

In Christ,


His Grace Bishop Mina,

on behalf of himself and on behalf of His Grace Bishop Makar and His Grace Bishop Boulos

Cc: The Honourable Minister of Health

Encl: On behalf of All Coptic Orthodox Parishes Listed in the Attached.

Coptic Orthodox Conference of Bishops of Ontario



List of Coptic Orthodox Parishes in Ontario

- 1 Archangel Michael & St. Tekla Coptic Orthodox Church, Brampton
- 2 Archangel Michael & St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church, North York
- 3 Archangel Raphael & St. Marina Coptic Orthodox Church, Burlington
- 4 Canadian Coptic Orthodox Church of the Nativity, Mississauga
- 5 Canadian Coptic Orthodox Church of the Resurrection, Mississauga
- 6 St. Bishop Coptic Orthodox Church, Stouffville
- 7 St. George & St. Abanoub Coptic Orthodox Church, Milton
- 8 St. George & St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church, Ottawa
- 9 St. George & St. Mercurius Coptic Orthodox Church, St. Catharines
- 10 St. George & St. Rueiss Coptic Orthodox Church, North York
- 11 St. John the Baptist & St. Elizabeth Coptic Orthodox Church, Oro Station
- 12 St. Mark & St. Mary of Egypt Coptic Orthodox Church, Ottawa
- 13 St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, Markham
- 14 St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church, Scarborough
- 15 St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox Church, Ajax
- 16 St. Mary & St. Joseph Coptic Orthodox Church, Richmond Hill
- 17 St. Mary & St. Maurice Coptic Orthodox Church, Kitchener
- 18 St. Mary & St. Moses Coptic Orthodox Church, Windsor
- 19 St. Mary & St. Samuel the Confessor Coptic Orthodox Church, Markham
- 20 St. Mary & St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church, Sudbury
- 21 St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Ottawa
- 22 St. Mary St. John The Beloved Coptic Orthodox Church, Pickering
- 23 St. Maurice & St. Verena Coptic Orthodox Church, Markham
- 24 St. Maximos & St. Dometius Coptic Orthodox Church, Mississauga
- 25 St. Mina & Pope Kyrillos Coptic Orthodox Church, Mississauga
- 26 St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church, Hamilton
- 27 St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church, Kingston
- 28 St. Moses & St. Katherine Coptic Orthodox Church, Toronto
- 29 St. Paul Coptic Orthodox Church, London
- 30 St. Peter & St. Paul Coptic Orthodox Church, Oakville
- 31 St. Philopateer & St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church, Mississauga
- 32 St. Philopateer & St. Demiana Coptic Orthodox Church, Newmarket
- 33 St. Philopateer & St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Orthodox Church, North York
- 34 St. Philopateer Coptic Orthodox Church, Guelph
- 35 The Prophet Daniel & the Three Saintly Youth Coptic Orthodox Church, Mississauga
- 36 Ti Agia Maria & St Demiana Church, Etobicoke
- 37 Virgin Mary & St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church, Mississauga
- 38 Canadian Coptic Convent St. Mary, St. George & St. Philopateer, Paisley